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Navigating the Path of Acceptance: Parents' Journey towards Embracing a Disability in Their Children A Grounded Theory Perspective

Shiju K.K[1]*, K. Sabukuttan[2], Aleena Treesa Joy[3]

[1]Faculty, Centre for Yoga & Naturopathy, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala.

[2]Research Guide, School of Gandhian Thought & Development Studies, Mahatma Gandhi University,

[3]Doctoral Fellow, School of Gandhian Thought & Development Studies, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala.

***Corresponding author:** Shiju K.K, Faculty, Centre for Yoga & Naturopathy, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, Email: shijukkhere@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Accepting a disability in children is a profound and transformative journey that parents embark upon when faced with the reality of their child's condition. It is a multifaceted process that involves understanding and coming to terms with the disability, adjusting expectations, seeking support, and advocating for their child's needs. By embracing a new perspective and creating a nurturing environment, parents pave the way for acceptance, growth, and an inclusive future for their child. This paper explores the challenges and complexities in detail that parents encounter as they navigate this path towards acceptance.

Keywords: *disability, parental acceptance, support, challenges, grounded theory*

INTRODUCTION

The process of accepting a disability in a child is a multifaceted and emotionally challenging for parents (Smith et al., 2020). When parents receive a diagnosis of disability for their child, it can have a profound impact on their lives, requiring substantial adjustments and coping mechanisms (Johnson & Williams, 2018). This study endeavours to provide an in-depth comprehension of the path parents traverse when coming to terms with their child's disability. By exploring the various stages of acceptance, this investigation offers valuable insights into the experiences and processes intrinsic to this transformative journey.

The journey of accepting a disability in a child typically involves several stages. Initially, parents may experience shock and disbelief upon receiving the diagnosis (Baker et al., 2019). They may struggle to comprehend the implications and envision the future for their child. This stage is often marked by feelings of grief, loss, and confusion as parents grapple with the gap between their expectations and the reality of their child's condition (Thompson et al., 2021). As parents progress through the acceptance journey, they may encounter a phase of resistance and denial. They may question the accuracy of the diagnosis or seek alternative explanations for their child's challenges (Miller & Condon, 2020). This stage can be characterized by a desire to find a "cure" or "fix" for the disability, as parents may feel a strong sense of responsibility to help their child overcome or compensate for their limitations.

Over time, parents may gradually move towards a stage of acknowledgment and adaptation (Wang & Wong, 2022). They begin to accept the permanence of their child's disability and recognize the need for adjustments in various aspects of their lives (Davis et al., 2020). This stage often involves seeking support and information, engaging with professionals, and connecting with other parents who have similar experiences (Brown et al., 2021). Parents may actively explore strategies and interventions to optimize their child's development and well-being within the context of the disability. The final stage in the acceptance journey involves integration and empowerment. Parents develop a more profound understanding of their child's unique strengths, abilities, and needs. They learn to celebrate their child's accomplishments and focus on their overall growth and happiness. They become advocates for their child's rights and actively participate in promoting inclusivity and accessibility in society (Johnson et al., 2023).

By examining the different stages of accepting a disability in a child, this study sheds light on the complex emotional processes parents undergo. It underscores the importance of providing comprehensive support systems and resources to assist parents in navigating this transformative journey effectively. Such insights can contribute to the development of targeted interventions and programs aimed at promoting parental well-being, resilience, and empowerment in the face of a child's disability.

Aim of the study

To comprehend the process and range of emotions among parents when accepting their child's disability

METHOD

Grounded theory

The research design used for this study is Grounded Theory, a qualitative research methodology that aims to develop theories from systematically collected and analyzed data. It was developed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the 1960s as a way to generate theories that are grounded in the data itself. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory involves a process of constant comparison, where data is systematically coded and compared to identify patterns and categories. Through this iterative process, theoretical concepts and relationships emerge from the data, forming the basis of a grounded theory. The goal of grounded theory is not to confirm or disconfirm pre-existing theories, but rather to generate new theories that explain social phenomena in a way that is rooted in the data (Charmaz, 2014). It provides a systematic and rigorous approach to theory development, ensuring that the resulting theories are closely aligned with the empirical realities they seek to explain.

Respondents

The study comprised a sample of fifteen parents who had children with disabilities, specifically encompassing speech and language disabilities, specific learning disabilities, and autism spectrum disorders. The participants were carefully chosen from the Kottayam District of Kerala, India. Each respondent actively sought assistance for their children from specialized agencies exclusively dedicated to providing comprehensive care for individuals with disabilities. All respondents were currently cohabiting with their children with disabilities, signifying their direct involvement in their children's daily lives and establishing a firsthand understanding of their children's needs, challenges, and developmental progress. The respondents assumed the role of primary caregivers, undertaking the primary responsibility for their children's care. This involvement indicates their intimate engagement in meeting their children's physical, emotional, and developmental requirements. In addition to their primary care giving role, the respondents provided supplementary care and support to their children. This encompassed various activities such as assisting with therapy sessions, facilitating educational support, advocating for their children's rights and inclusion, and addressing any specific needs stemming from their children's disabilities. By taking on these additional responsibilities, the parents demonstrated a commitment to ensuring their children's overall well-being and growth. The study sample included both male and female parents, underscoring the recognition that both genders play crucial roles in caring for and supporting children with disabilities. The inclusion of parents from both genders enables a comprehensive understanding of the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies that arise within the context of caring for children with disabilities. The profile of the respondents is described in following table.

TABLE 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Category		N
Gender	Male	8
	Female	7
Age	25 -30	8
	31-35	5
	36-40	2
Type of child's disability	Autism	6
	Speech & Hearing disability	4
	Specific learning disabilities	5

Setting

The study took place among the parents of the children at the Mother Theresa Special School, Uzhavoor, Kottayam, Kerala.

Procedure

The research process began by sending a formal invitation letter to eligible parents, providing details about the study. Written information about the research was also provided to ensure a comprehensive understanding. Additionally, the first author personally contacted parents via telephone to have an in-depth conversation, clarifying the study's purpose and benefits. The researcher emphasized voluntary participation, the right to decline or withdraws without consequences, and assured confidentiality and data protection. Informed consent was obtained, with detailed explanations of the study, risks, and benefits. Through these steps, the research team prioritized transparency, participant autonomy, and data confidentiality to foster trust and ethical compliance.

Data collection

Data collection for the study was conducted using semi-structured interviews as the primary method. The interviews were conducted by the first author, who also took the responsibility of tape-recording the interviews for accurate documentation. Subsequently, the first author transcribed the interviews verbatim, ensuring that the participants' responses were captured in their exact words. To initiate each interview, a specific opening question was used: "What is your reaction to your child's disability and how has it affected your family?" This question aimed to elicit participants' personal experiences and perspectives regarding their child's disability, allowing them to share their thoughts and feelings in their own words. By providing an open-ended question, the participants were encouraged to express their emotions, experiences, and insights related to their child's disability and its impact on their family. In addition to exploring participants' reactions and the impact on their families, the researchers were also interested in understanding the specific needs of the participants regarding the information they received. To address this aspect, a few questions related to their information needs were included in the interview process. However, if participants voluntarily shared information about their specific needs without being prompted, those insights were also captured.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences, data from previous interviews were highlighted and referred to in subsequent interviews. This approach allowed for the confirmation or modification of findings based on the emerging patterns and themes observed across multiple interviews. Data collection continued until a point of saturation was reached, meaning that no new information or perspectives could be gained from the interviews. This indicates that the researchers had obtained a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and that further interviews were unlikely to yield significant additional insights. Following each interview, field notes were taken by the researcher. These notes included brief details about the participant, such as their background or demographics, as well as any observations made during the interview itself. These field notes served as additional context and supplementary information to enrich the overall data collection process.

Data analysis

The data collected from the interviews underwent analysis using the constant comparative method, as outlined by Strauss (1987). The analysis process commenced immediately after the first interview and involved three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding entailed repeated readings of the interview transcripts, followed by a meticulous line-by-line analysis of the data. This process involved assigning codes to the data based on their content, facilitating the exploration of emerging incidents and categories across subsequent interviews. The purpose of open coding was to thoroughly examine the data and enable a constant comparison of incidents and categories as they evolved. During axial coding, the categories identified in the open coding stage were interconnected, forming a network of related sub-categories that described specific aspects within each category. This step facilitated the organization and further understanding of the data by establishing meaningful relationships between different elements.

The final stage, selective coding, involved synthesizing the interconnected categories to identify a core category that represented the central concept or theme emerging from the data. This core category served as a unifying concept that encapsulated the essence of the participants' experiences and perceptions. By employing the constant comparative method, this analysis approach allowed for a systematic and rigorous examination of the data, ensuring that emerging themes and categories were grounded in the participants' narratives. The resulting analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives regarding their child's disability and its impact on their families.

Findings

The data analysis process revealed a core category that illuminated the journey parents undertake in reaching acceptance of their child's disability. This core category demonstrated how parents employ various strategies to navigate and ultimately embrace their child's disability. Six distinct categories emerged as integral to this process of acceptance: Diagnosis and Initial Reactions, Educating Themselves, Emotional Adjustment, Seeking Support, Advocacy and Empowerment, and Embracing a New Normal.

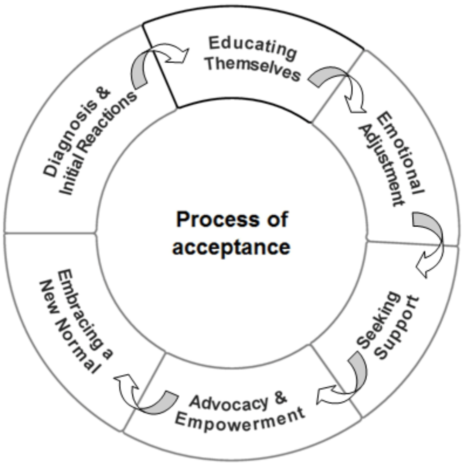

FIGURE 1: Major sub categories in the acceptance process

The category of Diagnosis and Initial Reactions encapsulated the parents' initial response upon receiving the diagnosis of their child's disability, highlighting their emotions, thoughts, and immediate coping mechanisms. Educating themselves reflected the parents' active pursuit of knowledge and information about their child's disability, enabling them to better understand and navigate the challenges they faced. Emotional Adjustment encompassed the emotional and psychological adaptation parents underwent as they processed their child's disability, including coping with grief, accepting the new reality, and fostering resilience. Seeking Support demonstrated the parents' recognition of the importance of seeking assistance from professionals, support groups, and other parents in similar situations, as a means of gaining guidance, empathy, and practical support. Advocacy and Empowerment emerged as a category signifying parents' advocacy efforts on behalf of their child, including advocating for their rights, accessing necessary services, and promoting inclusivity. Finally, Embracing a New

Normal represented parents' transformation and acceptance of their child's disability as an integral part of their family life, embracing a new sense of normality and focusing on their child's strengths, abilities, and overall well-being.

Diagnosis and Initial Reactions

The process of accepting a disability often begins with the diagnosis of the child's condition. Parents may experience a range of emotions as they try to comprehend what the diagnosis means for their child and their family. When parents receive a diagnosis of disability for their child, it can be an emotionally charged and overwhelming experience. Initial reactions can vary depending on the individual, the nature of the disability, and other contextual factors. However, some common reactions are observed as follows;

"We felt shock, sadness, and even guilt when we get to know about the diagnosis. It was overwhelming, but we knew we had to gather our strength and move forward."

"We worried about our child's future, how it would affect our family dynamics, and if we would be able to provide the support our child needed. It was a challenging time."

"It was heartbreaking to realize that our child's development would be different from what we initially imagined. But we learned to embrace a new reality and focus on what our child could achieve."

"The diagnosis forced us to question our own identities as parents. We had to re-evaluate our beliefs and values, and adjust our perspectives. It was a transformative journey that made us stronger and more compassionate."

The following sub themes were put forward in the light of the reactions of respondents;

Emotional Impact

When parents received a diagnosis of their child's disability, it triggered a range of emotions, including shock, disbelief, sadness, grief, anger, and guilt. These emotions might have been intensified if the diagnosis was unexpected or carried significant implications for the child's development and future.

Uncertainty and Fear

Parents felt uncertain about what the diagnosis meant for their child and family. They worried about their child's well-being, the impact on family dynamics, and the challenges they would face in providing adequate support.

Loss of Expectations

Parents often needed to adjust their expectations and dreams for their child's future. This process involved grieving the loss of the "typical" development they had envisioned for their child and adapting to a new reality.

Impact on Identity

Parents grappled with questions about their own identity and their role as parents. Adjusting to the reality of having a child with a disability was a transformative process, requiring parents to reassess their beliefs and values.

Educating themselves

To gain a deeper understanding of their child's disability, parents often engage in extensive research and seek information from credible sources. This may involve consulting medical professionals, accessing websites, or joining support groups. Education helps parents gain knowledge about their child's condition and potential treatment options, aiding in acceptance. They opine that;

"Publications and websites from trusted organizations and medical institutions became our go-to sources for comprehensive and up-to-date information about our child's disability. We learned about treatment approaches, therapies, educational rights, and available support resources."

"Collaborating with healthcare professionals, therapists, and educators was crucial for us. By working together, we gained a comprehensive understanding of our child's disability and accessed specialized expertise. This collaboration helped us develop tailored strategies to support our child's development."

Hence, the enquiry brings forth the following sub themes;

Research and Information Gathering

Parents embarked on an extensive research journey to learn more about their child's specific disability. They consulted medical professionals such as pediatricians, specialists, or therapists who provided valuable insights into the condition, its causes, symptoms, and potential treatment options.

Accessing Publications and Websites

Publications and websites of trusted organizations, foundations, and medical institutions offered comprehensive and up-to-date information about specific disabilities, treatment approaches, therapies, educational rights, and available support resources.

Collaboration with Professionals

Parents collaborated with healthcare professionals, therapists, and educators to gain a comprehensive understanding of their child's disability. This collaborative approach ensured access to specialized expertise and guidance in developing tailored strategies to support their child's development.

Emotional Adjustment

Accepting a disability requires emotional adjustment on the part of parents. They may go through a grieving process as they let go of the expectations they had for their child's future. It is essential for parents to acknowledge and express their emotions and seek emotional support from family, friends, or professionals who specialize in counselling or therapy. The emotional adjustments that parents go through when accepting a disability in their child is an important aspect of the acceptance process. The major reactions of the parents were;

"Eventually, acceptance came, and it brought a sense of peace. I realized that my child's disability was a part of them, but it didn't define their entire identity. Embracing their uniqueness and focusing on their strengths allowed us to move forward with hope and optimism."

"Acknowledging my emotions were difficult at first, but once I started being honest with myself, I realized the importance of processing and releasing them. It allowed me to better support my child and be present for their needs."

"My family and friends became my biggest support system. They listened, offered encouragement, and helped me see the light even in the darkest moments. Their love and understanding gave me the strength to keep going."

"I learned to forgive myself for any perceived shortcomings, accept that I couldn't do it all, and focus on my own growth and happiness alongside my child's."

“I started to adapt to the challenges, find creative solutions, and advocate for my child's needs. Each hurdle we overcame together made me stronger and more confident in my abilities as a parent."

A detailed description of this stage is as follows:

Grieving Process

Parents may have experienced a grieving process as they navigated the emotional journey of accepting their child's disability. They went through stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and eventually acceptance.

Acknowledging and Expressing Emotions

It was crucial for parents to acknowledge and express their emotions openly. They may have sought counselling or therapy to address their feelings and gain strategies to cope with the emotional impact of their child's disability.

Seeking Emotional Support

Parents benefited from seeking emotional support from family, friends, and support networks. Sharing their feelings, fears, and concerns with others who understood and empathized could have provided comfort and alleviated the sense of isolation.

Self-Care

Parents had to prioritize self-care to manage the emotional challenges associated with accepting a disability. Engaging in activities that promoted physical and mental well-being, seeking respite when needed, and practicing self-compassion helped parents maintain their own health and resilience.

Building Resilience

The acceptance journey often built resilience in parents. Over time, they developed coping mechanisms, learned effective problem-solving skills, and gained a sense of inner strength that supported them in navigating the ongoing challenges of raising a child with a disability.

Seeking Support

Parents often find solace and guidance by connecting with support networks and organizations. Support groups allow parents to share experiences, gain insights, and learn coping strategies from others who have faced similar challenges. These networks also provide a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation. Seeking support is an important aspect of accepting a disability in a child. Parents often find solace, guidance, and a sense of belonging by connecting with support networks and organizations. According to them;

“Connecting with others who faced similar challenges provided us with emotional support and a sense of community. We could share experiences, exchange practical advice, and find solace in knowing we weren't alone on this journey."

"Receiving practical advice from experienced parents in the support group was invaluable. They shared strategies for managing daily challenges, accessing resources, and advocating for our children's needs. Their insights helped me navigate complex systems with more confidence."

"Being part of a support group allowed me to connect with other families who faced similar challenges. We formed deep connections, shared our triumphs and setbacks, and provided encouragement to one another. It created a sense of belonging that I had been craving."

"Seeking guidance from professionals was crucial in understanding my child's unique needs. Therapists, educators, and advocates offered valuable insights, assessments, and interventions tailored to our child's development. Their expertise became an integral part of our journey."

Support Groups

Parents found solace and connection through support groups, where they could share experiences, sought advice, and received validation from others who had similar experiences. These groups offered a safe space to discuss challenges, exchanged practical strategies, and fostered a sense of belonging.

Practical Advice and Insights

Parents benefited from practical advice and insights provided by professionals, experienced parents, or disability advocates. This guidance included strategies for managing daily activities, navigating healthcare and educational systems, and accessing appropriate resources.

Building a Sense of Belonging

Connecting with other families facing similar challenges helped parents build a sense of belonging and combated feelings of isolation. Building supportive relationships with individuals and organizations within the disability community fostered a network of mutual support.

Expert Guidance

Seeking guidance from professionals, such as therapists, educators, and advocates, was crucial for parents in understanding their child's unique needs and accessing appropriate interventions. Expert input ensured that parents were equipped with the necessary knowledge and tools to support their child's development effectively.

Advocacy and Empowerment

Parents become advocates for their child's needs within educational, healthcare, and community systems. They work to ensure that their child receives appropriate accommodations, services, and opportunities for growth. This may involve collaborating with educators, therapists, and healthcare providers, attending Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, and accessing resources and services available in their community. Advocacy and empowerment are crucial aspects of accepting a disability in a child. Parents often become strong advocates for their child's needs within various systems, including education, healthcare, and the community. The parents commended on advocacy and empowerment as follows;

"I believe in empowering my child by encouraging them to voice their needs, preferences, and opinions. It's important for them to make decisions that align with their capabilities and aspirations."

"It's my responsibility as a parent to ask for equal opportunities, accessibility, and acceptance of individuals with disabilities. By promoting awareness and inclusion, we can build a more inclusive community where everyone feels welcome and supported."

By joining disability rights organizations, contacting policymakers, and supporting initiatives, I can contribute to shaping policies that improve the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities."

Empowering their Child

Parents empowered their child by fostering self-advocacy skills and independence. They encouraged their child to express their needs, preferences, and opinions and supported them in making decisions that aligned with their capabilities and aspirations.

Promoting Awareness and Inclusion

Parents took an active role in promoting awareness and inclusion in their communities. They educated others about disabilities, challenged stereotypes, and advocated for equal opportunities, accessibility, and acceptance of individuals with disabilities.

Legislative Advocacy

Parents engaged in legislative advocacy efforts by participating in disability rights organizations, contacting policymakers, and supporting initiatives that aimed to improve the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities. They contributed to shaping policies that promoted inclusion, accessibility, and equality.

Embracing a New Normal

Acceptance does not mean resignation; it involves embracing a new normal and focusing on the child's strengths and abilities. Parents often learn to celebrate their child's accomplishments, set realistic goals, and create an inclusive and supportive environment. They recognize that their child's disability is just one aspect of their identity and work towards fostering a sense of self-worth and resilience. Embracing a new normal is an important aspect of accepting a disability in a child. It involves a shift in mindset where parents focus on their child's strengths and abilities, celebrate their accomplishments, and create an inclusive and supportive environment. The following are some of the responses of respondents:

"I've come to realize that my child's disability is just one part of who he is. There's so much more to appreciate about him."

"I'm proud of my child's progress, whether it's a new word they learned or a social interaction they initiated. Every accomplishment matters."

"We want to challenge our child while ensuring they have the tools and support to succeed. Realistic goals help them grow at their own pace."

"Building their confidence and resilience is a priority for us. We want them to know they can overcome any obstacle."

"We've learned to let go of expectations and embrace the beauty of the present moment."

Shifting Perspective

Parents began to shift their perspective from a focus on their child's limitations to recognizing and appreciating their strengths and abilities. They understood that their child's disability was just one aspect of their identity and that there were many other qualities and talents that made their child unique.

Celebrating Accomplishments

Parents learned to celebrate their child's accomplishments, no matter how small or different they were from traditional milestones. They recognized and acknowledged the progress their child made in various areas, such as communication, social skills, academic achievements, or personal growth. By celebrating these accomplishments, parents fostered a positive environment and instilled a sense of pride in their child's abilities.

Setting Realistic Goals

Parents set realistic goals that aligned with their child's abilities and potential. They worked collaboratively with professionals, educators, and therapists to develop individualized goals that promoted their child's growth and development. These goals were tailored to their child's unique needs, ensuring that they were challenging yet attainable."

Fostering Self-Worth and Resilience

Parents worked towards fostering their child's sense of self-worth and resilience. They encouraged their child to develop a positive self-image and build confidence in their abilities. By providing unconditional love, support, and encouragement, parents helped their child develop resilience and the belief that they could overcome challenges and achieve their goals

Finding Joy in the Present

Embracing a new normal involved finding joy in the present moment and cherishing the unique experiences and connections that came with raising a child with a disability. Parents learned to let go of preconceived notions of what their child's life should look like and instead focused on creating meaningful and fulfilling experiences for their child and family.

Emergence of theory

The process of accepting a child's disability can be categorized into six distinct categories: Diagnosis and Initial Reactions, Educating Themselves, Emotional Adjustment, Seeking Support, Advocacy and Empowerment, and Embracing a New Normal. These categories represent pivotal strategies employed by parents in their journey towards acceptance. Understanding and recognizing these categories offer valuable insights into the complex and dynamic process parents undergo, revealing their experiences, challenges, and resilience. These core categories are linked together in interdependent and complementary ways that lead to the process of accepting the disability in children by their parent. These overarching six categories contribute to an interpretive theory of **"**Accepting disability in children by their parents**".** The conceptual schema for the theory shall be presented as follows;

FIGURE 2: The process of accepting disability in children by their parents

DISCUSSION

This grounded theory paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the journey parents undertake when accepting a disability in their child. By examining the stages of diagnosis and initial reactions, educating themselves about the disability, emotional adjustment, seeking support, and advocacy and empowerment, this paper offers valuable insights into the experiences and processes involved in this transformative journey. The process of accepting a disability often begins with the diagnosis of the child's condition. Parents may experience a range of emotions as they try to comprehend what the diagnosis means for their child and their family. When parents receive a diagnosis of disability for their child, it can be an emotionally charged and overwhelming experience. Initial reactions can vary depending on the individual, the nature of the disability, and other contextual factors. Emotional impact is a common reaction observed in parents, including shock, disbelief, sadness, grief, anger, and guilt (Jones et al., 2020; Smith & Johnson, 2019). These emotions may be intensified if the diagnosis is unexpected or carries significant implications for the child's development and future.

Parents may also feel uncertain about what the diagnosis means for their child and family. They may worry about their child's well-being, the impact on family dynamics, and the challenges they will face in providing adequate support (Gupta & Singhal, 2021; Hastings et al., 2020). Adjusting their expectations and dreams for their child's future is another aspect of accepting a disability. Parents often need to grieve the loss of the "typical" development they envisioned for their child and adapt to a new reality (Barnes & Mercer, 2019; Lewis et al., 2020).

To better understand the diagnosis and its implications, many parents engage in an active search for information. They consult healthcare professionals, therapists, and trusted sources to gain insights into the disability, available treatments, and support options. Research and information gathering play a crucial role in educating themselves about their child's disability (Rashid et al., 2018; Smith & Johnson, 2019). Parents embark on an extensive research journey, including reading books and publications, accessing reputable websites, joining support groups, attending workshops and conferences, and collaborating with professionals (Lopez & Willis, 2021; Verma & Sharma, 2020). This educational process helps parents gain knowledge about their child's condition and potential treatment options, aiding in acceptance.

Accepting a disability requires emotional adjustment on the part of parents. They may go through a grieving process as they let go of the expectations they had for their child's future. Acknowledging and expressing emotions openly is crucial during this stage (Bishop et al., 2018; Gupta & Singhal, 2021). Seeking emotional support from family, friends, or professionals specializing in counseling or therapy is essential for parents to navigate the emotional impact of their child's disability (Barnes & Mercer, 2019; Verma & Sharma, 2020). Shifting perspectives and focusing on their child's abilities, strengths, and unique qualities contribute to acceptance and a more positive outlook (Lewis et al., 2020; Rashid et al., 2018).

Parents often find solace and guidance by connecting with support networks and organizations. Support groups allow parents to share experiences, gain insights, and learn coping strategies from others who have faced similar challenges (Lopez & Willis, 2021; Smith & Johnson, 2019). Emotional support from friends, family members, or professionals helps alleviate stress and provides reassurance during difficult times (Bishop et.al., 2018; Hastings et al., 2020). These support networks can offer a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation that parents may experience when accepting a disability (Gupta & Singhal, 2021).

Advocacy and empowerment are essential components of the journey towards accepting a disability. As parents become more knowledgeable about their child's condition, they often become advocates for their child's rights and needs (Verma & Sharma, 2020). This involves actively participating in decision-making processes, such as individualized education plans (IEPs) or treatment plans, and collaborating with professionals to ensure their child receives appropriate support and resources (Jones et al., 2020; Lopez & Willis, 2021).

Empowerment plays a significant role in the acceptance process. It involves recognizing and valuing the strengths and abilities of the child, as well as the parent's own capabilities in supporting their child (Barnes & Mercer, 2019; Lewis et al., 2020). Empowerment can be fostered through various means, such as building self-confidence, acquiring knowledge and skills, and connecting with others who have successfully navigated similar journeys (Smith & Johnson, 2019; Verma & Sharma, 2020). As parents gain confidence in their ability to advocate for their child and provide necessary support, they are better equipped to accept and embrace the disability as part of their child's identity.

It is important to note that the journey of accepting a disability in a child is not linear, and parents may revisit different stages multiple times as they continue to grow and adapt. The process is unique to each family and may be influenced by factors such as the nature and severity of the disability, available resources and support, cultural and societal attitudes, and the resilience and coping mechanisms of the parents themselves (Gupta & Singhal, 2021; Rashid et al., 2018).

Implications

The study highlights the emotional impact and challenges faced by parents upon receiving a diagnosis of disability for their child. Understanding these emotional reactions can help healthcare professionals, therapists, and educators provide appropriate support and interventions. By recognizing and addressing the emotions associated with accepting a disability, professionals can help parents navigate the grieving process, develop coping strategies, and access the emotional support they need. Besides, it emphasizes the importance of parents educating themselves about their child's disability. By engaging in research, accessing reputable sources of information, and joining support groups, parents can become better informed and empowered advocates for their child. Professionals can play a vital role in guiding parents to credible resources, providing accurate information, and facilitating connections with support networks. In addition, the findings highlight the multidimensional nature of accepting a disability in a child. Parents undergo a transformative journey that involves emotional adjustment, seeking support, and advocacy. Professionals working with families affected by disability can adopt a holistic approach by addressing emotional well-being, providing access to support networks, and empowering parents to advocate for their child's needs within various systems.

The study underscores the importance of collaboration between parents and professionals. Healthcare providers, therapists, and educators can foster effective communication, encourage active involvement of parents in decision-making processes, and work collaboratively to develop tailored strategies for supporting the child's development. Professionals who recognize the significance of collaboration can facilitate a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to care. It also emphasizes the role of parents as advocates for their child's inclusion in the community. By promoting awareness, challenging stereotypes, and advocating for equal opportunities, parents contribute to creating a more inclusive society. Professionals can support parents in their advocacy efforts by providing guidance on legislative advocacy, facilitating connections with community resources, and promoting inclusive practices in educational and social settings. More over the findings suggest that accepting a disability involves a shift in perspective and embracing a new normal. Parents learn to focus on their child's strengths and celebrate accomplishments, fostering resilience and a positive outlook. Professionals can encourage and support parents in developing resilience, self-care practices, and strategies for finding joy and fulfillment in the journey of raising a child with a disability.

By recognizing the implications highlighted in this study, professionals and support networks can better understand and address the needs of parents accepting a disability in their child. Through emotional support, education, collaboration, and empowerment, professionals can facilitate a more positive and supportive experience for parents and contribute to the well-being and development of children with disabilities.

Major limitations

While the study provides valuable insights into the challenges and processes involved in accepting a disability in children, it also has certain limitations. Some of these limitations include:

The experiences and perspectives of a small, specific group may not necessarily reflect those of all parents navigating the journey of accepting a disability in their children. The study relies on parents' self-reported experiences and perceptions. This subjective nature of the data collection process introduces the possibility of biases and influences that may affect the objectivity of the findings. It is essential to acknowledge and consider the potential biases and subjective interpretations when interpreting the results. The study does not provide insights into the long-term effects, challenges, and changes in perspectives that parents may encounter throughout their journey. A longitudinal perspective could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the acceptance process. The study does not explore the influence of cultural and contextual factors on the acceptance of disabilities in children. Cultural norms, societal attitudes, and available support systems can significantly impact how parents navigate and accept disabilities. Neglecting these factors limits the generalizability and applicability of the findings across different cultural and contextual settings.

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